

# Umbagog

## National Wildlife Refuge

### *Facts and Information on the Refuge CCP*

Community members and many other people helped shape the Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). The CCP provides a clear direction for managing wildlife conservation and recreational uses on the Refuge.

Refuge staff (we) understand that many people continue to have concerns about the policies, regulations and management guidance included in the CCP. As we continue to listen and engage in public dialogue about Refuge management, we want to make sure that we share a common understanding of what's included in the CCP.

We hope that the following responses to several frequently asked questions will help address some of the concerns that have been expressed to us.

#### LAND ACQUISITION

**“What are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)’s land purchase policies? Why are you continuing to acquire land for the refuge? How much is enough?”**

- The Service has a “willing seller only” policy for acquiring lands for the National Wildlife Refuge System. We only buy land from people who want to sell to us, and never force people to sell their property. The Service will NOT take your land from you.
- The Refuge was originally established to protect wetlands and migratory land and water birds. The land conservation plan we proposed in the CCP made protection of significant wetlands and state-identified important wildlife areas such as deer wintering areas a priority. We also considered habitat and area requirements of other wildlife and connection to other conserved lands.
- In the CCP we analyzed a 150,000-acre study area. This analysis called for an increase in the Refuge boundary by about 48,000 acres. We proposed purchasing about 27,000 acres of wetlands and shorelines outright from willing sellers. About 21,000 acres of uplands adjacent to these wetlands were proposed for conservation easement acquisition (not purchase in fee title). However, whether or not we are able to buy an easement on a property is dependent on the wishes of the seller. Some sellers may be unwilling to sell an easement on their property and may prefer to sell it outright. Under these circumstances, we would consider purchasing some lands originally designated for conservation easement in our plan.
- We have always had a partnership approach to conservation and if a state, county or local government entity can conserve the land, we support their efforts and work cooperatively with them.



Mary Konchar

- The vast majority of the lands in the expansion area of the Refuge are undeveloped. We purposefully avoided areas along main roads to allow the towns to decide how they wanted to develop these areas.

**“Why have Refuge Revenue Sharing Payments declined below the town’s tax loss due to Refuge ownership?”**

- Although the federal government doesn’t pay property taxes for public lands it manages, the Service has provided compensation to towns and counties where National Wildlife Refuges are located through the National Wildlife Refuge Fund. These payments are intended to lessen economic hardship to communities.
- There has been insufficient revenue in the National Wildlife Refuge Fund to fully fund annual payments. The U.S. Congress has the discretion to appropriate funds for refuge revenue sharing.
- In fiscal year 2012, Refuge Revenue Sharing payments from the Fund were at 21% of the full payment level.

## LAND MANAGEMENT

### **"Will the Refuge harvest trees and pay timber taxes?"**

#### **YES, because:**

- The Refuge Forest Management Plan is nearly complete.
- There are currently 4,800 acres of upland forest that is merchantable (at least 30 feet tall and sufficiently stocked).
- We will use commercial harvesting to create some of the habitat conditions called for in our CCP.
- We will use clear-cut techniques in our American woodcock focus areas and single and small group selection in other areas.
- We will harvest an average of 320 acres annually yielding approximately 900-950 cords per year.
- Eventually most manageable forested uplands will enter the harvest cycle when they grow to a harvestable height class and stocking level.
- We will require logging contractors to pay New Hampshire towns an amount equal to what they would have received in timber tax.
- We will primarily use a public bidding process to hire logging contractors to complete our timber harvests.
- We welcome hearing from contractors who are interested in bidding on our planned timber harvests.

## PUBLIC USE

### **"What can I do on the refuge?"**

- Hunt (according to State regulations, with some restrictions – see the section on hunting for more information)
- Fish (according to State regulations)
- Watch wildlife
- Photograph wildlife, plants, landscapes
- Camp (at designated sites and by reservation)
- Pick blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, raspberries, mushrooms, fiddleheads and antler sheds for personal use.
- Snowmobile (on designated trails)
- Dogsled (on designated snowmobile trails, and per State regulations)
- Bicycle (on roads and designated trails)
- Horseback ride (on designated trails)
- Motorboat (according to State regulations)
- Canoe
- Kayak
- Hike
- Enjoy nature

### **"What are the regulations on hunting and trapping? Why are there restrictions beyond those included in State regulations?"**

- Hunting on the Refuge is governed by State regulations, with some additional restrictions as follows.
- Non-toxic shot is required for hunting small game. This restriction is based on scientific studies that have shown the negative impacts of spent lead shot on other wildlife, including songbirds and predators such as eagles.
- Hunter orange is required. This was national policy at the time our public hunting plan was developed. We have submitted proposed changes to this regulation for the upcoming 2012 hunting seasons. We propose requiring hunter orange in accordance with Maine regulations. For New Hampshire hunters, this means one item of hunter orange during moose season, regardless of the species you are hunting, and two items during muzzleloader and deer season. Hunter orange is not required during other seasons.
- Baiting is not allowed under federal law.
- Night hunting is not allowed. Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge is open from sunrise to sunset.
- The number of dogs used to hunt is regulated. This was determined during the development of the Refuge Hunting Plan to reduce the potential impact dogs may have on other wildlife. We have submitted proposed changes to these regulations for this year's hunting season. We proposed that most restrictions be lifted.



Marvin Moriarty/USFWS

#### *Snowmobilers on the Refuge*

- Turkey hunting is not allowed. Turkeys were not present when the Hunting Plan was developed. We plan to consider amending this provision during a future public review process.
- Bobcat hunting is not allowed. We did not have sufficient information to open to bobcat hunting in Maine in our Hunting Plan. We plan to consider amending this in our Hunting Plan in a future public review process.
- Trapping is not allowed. We plan to consider opening the Refuge to trapping through a publicly reviewed Furbearer Management Plan in the near future.
- The Refuge provides free waterfowl blinds to the public. A reservation is required.
- Portable tree stands are allowed, however inserting a screw, nail or spike into a tree is prohibited. Tree stands must be removed at the end of the season.
- Temporary blinds may be used, but must be removed at the end of the day.

We welcome and will consider your suggestions on hunting and trapping on the Refuge and will use these comments



Cindy Williams/Wagner Forest Management

*Logs harvested at Magalloway, Maine*



in the development of our plans. We will announce opportunities to formally comment on the Amended Hunting Plan and the Furbearer Management Plan as these plans are developed.

### **"What does this sign mean?"**



- This sign only defines and marks the Refuge boundary. We are required by national policy to mark our boundary. The signs identify the Refuge as public land and help you know when you are on Refuge property. It does NOT mean 'no trespassing' or 'no hunting' or 'no' to any other permitted activity.
- "Area Closed" signs are used to protect nesting birds and are also placed around our maintenance facility. "Area Closed" signs do prohibit entry by the public.

### **"Will the Refuge close designated snowmobile trails?"**

#### **NO, and here's why:**

- When the Refuge was established in 1992, we recognized the importance of snowmobiling to the community and its economy. We now have a 20 year track record of allowing snowmobiling on designated trails on the Refuge. The CCP continues to allow this use on designated trails.
- We will continue to work with the snowmobile clubs to keep trails open and find alternative routes around our timber harvests.
- Under the CCP, private/unofficial access trails will be closed. This is important especially where trails cross wetlands, cross through deer wintering areas, or potentially impact other sensitive resources.

### **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

#### **"What influence did I have on the CCP?"**

- Service planners and refuge staff solicited comments and questions at six public scoping meetings in 2001 to 2002. Two scoping meetings were held in Errol, N.H., one in Berlin, N.H., Bethel, Me., Augusta, Me. and Concord, N.H.

- After the public release of the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) for the CCP in June of 2007, the Refuge held two information sessions in Errol, five hearings in Errol, Newry, Berlin, Concord, Augusta, and one question-and-answer radio show in Berlin between July 10 and August 16, 2007.
- The public comment period for the draft EIS was 77 days, 32 days longer than required.
- A final EIS was developed and an additional 30 day comment period followed in 2008.
- We listened to your comments throughout the planning process. We responded to all comments in writing in the final EIS.
- We made modifications in the final EIS based on your comments, including:
  - Decreasing the Refuge expansion boundary
  - Increasing the percentage of possible land acquisition easements within the expansion boundary
  - Being more clear on what roads and trails we will keep open for public use
  - Allowing certain public uses we had originally decided not to allow, including:
    - Dogsledding
    - Horseback riding
    - Bicycling
    - Collecting certain berries, fiddleheads, mushrooms, and antler sheds for personal use



*American woodcock on nest*

**Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge**  
**P.O. Box 240**  
**Route 16 North**  
**Errol, NH 03579-0240**  
**603/482 3415**  
**603/482 3308 Fax**  
**[www.fws.gov/lakeumbagog](http://www.fws.gov/lakeumbagog)**

**Federal Relay Service**  
**for the deaf and hard-of-hearing**  
**1 800/877 8339**

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
**1 800/344 WILD**  
**<http://www.fws.gov>**

**July 2012**



*Blackburnian warbler*